

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1977

As of March 18, 2007

Title: An act relating to skill centers.

Brief Description: Regarding skill centers.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Quall, Fromhold, Priest, Curtis, Ormsby, Hunt, P. Sullivan, Haigh, Dunn, Kenney, Morrell and Wood).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/07/07, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/22/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: About 7,000 high school students from 85 school districts currently attend one of the ten skill centers across the state that provide in-depth instruction in career and technical skills. Students typically attend the skill center for part of the day and their home high school for the remainder of the day. Skill centers also offer summer school programs. Skill centers are not created in statute; instead, they function as a cooperative among participating school districts.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has developed guidelines for the initiation and operation of a skill center. The guidelines include that a skill center must enroll at least 70 percent of students on a core campus and must maintain at least 150 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The skill centers generate FTE funding through the general apportionment funding formula for enrolled students and receive enhanced funding for approved career and technical education courses. Skill centers are largely .6 FTE programs, leaving .4 FTE for the sending school district. If a student takes more than two classes at the sending school in addition to the skill center program, the sending school is not reimbursed for classes beyond the first two. Skill centers are located in Vancouver, Tumwater, Wenatchee, Port Angeles, SeaTac, Everett, Spokane, Kennewick, Bremerton, and Yakima. The 2005-07 biennial and 2006 supplemental capital budgets included funding for feasibility studies for additional skill centers in Skagit County, Moses Lake, northeast King County, Pierce County, and Seattle.

The 2006 Legislature directed the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) to conduct a study of skill centers and make recommendations on how to provide increased opportunities for students in areas without a skill center.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: A new RCW chapter is created addressing skill centers. A skill center is defined as a regional career and technical education partnership established to provide access to industry-defined programs of study that prepare students for careers, employment, apprenticeships, and postsecondary education. Skill centers are operated by a host school district and governed by an administrative council under a cooperative agreement.

Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, students attending skill centers must be funded for all classes at the skill center and at the sending districts, up to two FTEs. The OSPI must ensure that Student Achievement Account funds generated by skill center students are returned to skill centers.

The OSPI, in cooperation with the Workforce Board, skill center directors, and the Washington Association for Career and Technical Education, must revise the skill centers policy guidelines so that the threshold enrollment at a skill center need not have a minimum of 70 percent of students enrolled on the core campus, in order to facilitate serving rural students through satellite programs or branch campuses. Developmental planning for branch campuses is encouraged for underserved rural areas or high-density areas. Once a branch campus reaches sufficient enrollment to become self-sustaining, it can become a separate center or remain an extension of the founding center. Satellite and branch campus programs are encouraged to address high-demand fields. The OSPI must develop a ten-year capital plan for skill centers.

Subject to funding, the OSPI will conduct approved feasibility studies for serving rural and high-density area students and develop a master plan for creating a technology infrastructure to connect all skill centers to the K-20 network. Subject to available funding, skill centers must provide rural and high-density area students with access to late afternoon, evening, and summer school programs in high-demand occupations. When possible, the programs must be targeted for credit retrieval, dropout prevention and intervention, and dropout retrieval. Skill centers that receive funding must evaluate their efforts.

The OSPI must establish and broker the development of "Skill Centers of Excellence" in key economic sectors of regional significance, as well as identify their roles in developing curriculum and methodologies for reporting course equivalencies for high school graduation.

Once the Skill Centers of Excellence are established, the OSPI will seek funding for a Running Start for Career and Technical Education grant program to develop programs of study targeted to regionally-determined high-demand occupations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.